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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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The Livelihoods of Palestinian Refugees in Jordan's Wihdat refugee camp

The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) would like to bring to the Council's attention the dismal living situations of Palestinian refugees in Jordan's Wihdat refugee camp, and Israel's complicity in their situations due to its denial of their right of return.

Characteristics of Wihdat's Inhabitants

Jordan hosts the majority of Palestinian refugees outside of historical Palestine; the latest UNRWA statistics dating back to 2016 indicate that there were 2,175,491 registered Palestinian refugees in the country.[1] The Wihdat refugee camp, which is home to 58,311[2] of those 2 million Palestinian refugees, is one of the four camps that were set up after the 1948 war. Today, the camp has been co-opted into the urban landscape of the capital city Amman and is considered among its poorest neighborhoods.

The majority of the camp's inhabitants at 87.9% are Palestinian refugees who hold Palestinian citizenship.[3] Citizenship was given to Palestinian refugees based on Article 3 (b) of the Jordanian constitution.[4] Citizenship for Palestinian refugees unlocked the doors to access the right to work, property ownership, healthcare, and social protection, which are denied to other Palestinian refugees in Jordan with no citizenship.[5]

of everyone Livelihoods

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights obliges signatories to 'recognise the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.'[6]

The standards of living within the camp fall drastically short of being adequate. The camp is ranked second of the ten camps within Jordan in terms of poverty with 34% of its inhabitants reportedly having an income below the national poverty line of JD 814.[7] Additionally, 38% of households had a monthly income ranging between 101-200 JD.[8] In terms of employment, The camp is ranked second out of the ten camps in female unemployment standing at 24%.[9] Most of the employed, at 63.3%, work outside the camp due to the lack of opportunities.[10] Furthermore, despite having Jordanian citizenship, Palestinian refugees face obstacles when seeking to work in the public sector. Since the Syrian conflict, a huge demographic change has occurred as many Syrian refugees settled within Wihdat camp. With their

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1 "Jordan | UNRWA". 2018. UNRWA. https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan.

2 Department of Palestinian Affairs - Link

3 Fafo, DOS, DPA "Survey of Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the Camps of Jordan" – Tabulation Report for the Wihdat Camp. 2011. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://fafoarkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/livingconditions/camps/wihdat.pdf

4 *Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* [Jordan], 1 January 1952, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b53310.html [accessed 31 March 2018]

5 Shiblak, A, (2006), 'Stateless Palestinians', in Forced Migration Review, n.26.

6 UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 993, p. 3, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36c0.html [accessed 1 August 2018]

7 Åge Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, *Progress, Challenges, Diversity Insights Into The Socio-Economic Conditions Of Palestinian Refugees In Jordan* (Norway: Fafo, 2013), accessed June 17, 2017, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/ les/insights_into_the_socio-economic_conditions_of_palestinian_refugees_in_jordan.pdf.

8 Fafo, DOS, DPA "Survey of Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the Camps of Jordan" – Tabulation Report for the Wihdat Camp. 2011. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://fafoarkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/livingconditions/camps/wihdat.pdf

9 Åge Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, *Progress, Challenges, Diversity Insights Into The Socio-Economic Conditions Of Palestinian Refugees In Jordan* (Norway: Fafo, 2013), accessed June 17, 2017, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/ les/insights_into_the_socio-economic_conditions_of_palestinian_refugees_in_jordan.pdf.

10 Fafo, DOS, DPA "Survey of Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the Camps of Jordan" – Tabulation Report for the Wihdat Camp. 2011. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://fafoarkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/livingconditions/camps/wihdat.pdf

arrival, prices of properties, rent and basic goods soared, and the available job opportunities diminished. As a result of poverty and lack of opportunity, an illicit drug trade has flourished within the camp.

Despite having very high rates of poverty, only 34.3% of households receive assistance from UNRWA's Social Safety Net Program, and only 8.2% receive any assistance from the Government's National Aid Fund despite having Jordanian citizenship. In fact, statistics that are more recent indicate that the number of refugee households receiving aid from UNRWA[11] is only 165 out of the 12630 total number of households; this only amounts to 1.3% of the camp's population.

Health

The Wihdat refugee camp has one of the lowest median per capita square metres of living space among the camps making it one of the most crowded camps in Jordan. Over-crowdedness has a number of psychological and health negative effects.[12] From the perspective of physical health, 12.1% of the camp's inhabitants have a chronic health failure due to illness, injury or both.[13] Of those suffering a chronic health failure, 62.9% are unable to work and face a major hindrance by their health condition. What is most alarming is that the camp's inhabitants have a high rate of refugees with no health insurance measured at 65.9%.[14]

Right of Return

It is crucial to reiterate that the deprivation faced by Palestinians of the Wihdat camp is caused by Israel's denial of their right of return. 80.4% of the refugees have lived in the camp since birth, and if they were allowed to, many of them would return to Palestine and to the properties and families they left behind. Article 12 (4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, stipulates that: 'no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country.'[15] Furthermore, Palestinian refugee's right of return is enshrined in General Assembly Resolution 194, which resolves that 'the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so… and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property.'[16]

Recommendations

The safety nets provided by both UNRWA and the Jordanian Government are key to the survival of the poor population of Palestinian refugees living in Wihdat camp. Despite the financial problems facing UNRWA, and the direct negative effects these have on UNRWA's beneficiaries, it is imperative to refocus the world's attention on the importance of finding a just and lasting solution to the conflict that would respect the right of return and consequently eliminate the vulnerability and deprivation experienced by Palestinian refugees. The plight and dismal situations of the refugees of the occupied Palestinian territory is directly caused by Israel, which had forcibly displaced them in 1948 and subsequently denied them the right of return consistently for the last 70 years.

The Palestinian Return Centre calls on Mr. President and the Distinguished Members of the Council to:

- Put pressure on the Jordanian government to eliminate any and all discrimination faced by Palestinian refugees with Jordanian citizenship in line with its international human rights obligations
- Support the Jordanian government, which is shouldering the responsibility of hosting 2.2 million Palestinian refugees in its borders.

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11 Department of Palestinian Affairs - Link

12 Åge Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, *Progress, Challenges, Diversity Insights Into The Socio-Economic Conditions Of Palestinian Refugees In Jordan* (Norway: Fafo, 2013), accessed June 17, 2017, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/ les/insights_into_the_socio-economic_conditions_of_palestinian_refugees_in_jordan.pdf.

13 Fafo, DOS, DPA "Survey of Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the Camps of Jordan" – Tabulation Report for the Wihdat Camp. 2011. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://fafoarkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/livingconditions/camps/wihdat.pdf

14 Fafo, DOS, DPA "Survey of Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in the Camps of Jordan" – Tabulation Report for the Wihdat Camp. 2011. Accessed May 27, 2018. http://fafoarkiv.no/ais/middeast/jordan/livingconditions/camps/wihdat.pdf

15 UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3aa0.html [accessed 1 August 2018]

16 A/RES/194 (III)- https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/C758572B78D1CD0085256BCF0077E51A

- Aid UNRWA with the aim of expanding the coverage of the Social Safety Net programme to more poor refugees from Wihdat Camp, taking into account intlation and the rising prices caused by the arrival of Syrian refugees who receive much more support from the UNHCR
- Provide help to UNRWA and Jordan's Department of Palestinian Affairs in improving the livelihoods of refugees in Wihdat camp including access to food, housing conditions, and quality of health services.
- Collaborate with UNRWA and the Jordanian Government to increase the number of refugees with health insurance
- In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the international community should act to achieve Goal number 1, which aims to eradicate poverty amongst the Palestinian refugee population in Jordan.